

**RESPONSES TO FAQs ABOUT
VA’S SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR VETERAN FAMILIES (SSVF)
PROGRAM
(INCLUDING QUESTIONS RECEIVED DURING THE
SSVF PROGRAM WEBCAST ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2010)**

Questions are organized by the following areas:

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A. KEY TERMS

1. How does the SSVF Program define a “Veteran”?

A “Veteran” is defined as a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.

2. How is “Veteran family” defined?

Veteran family means a veteran who is a single person or a family in which the head of household, or the spouse of the head of household, is a veteran.

3. What does “very low-income Veteran family” mean?

Very low-income veteran family means a veteran family whose annual income, as determined in accordance with 24 CFR 5.609, does not exceed 50 percent of the median income for an area or community, as will be adjusted by VA based on family size and as may be adjusted and announced by VA in the Notice of Fund Availability based on residency within an area with unusually high or low construction costs, fair market rents (as determined under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f)), or family incomes. Unless VA announces otherwise in the Notice of Fund Availability, the median income for an area or community will be determined using the income limits most recently published by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for programs under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f).

4. What does “occupying permanent housing” mean?

A very low-income veteran family will be considered to be occupying permanent housing if the very low-income veteran family:

- (i) Is residing in permanent housing;
- (ii) Is homeless and scheduled to become a resident of permanent housing within 90 days

pending the location or development of housing suitable for permanent housing; or

(iii) Has exited permanent housing within the previous 90 days to seek other housing that is responsive to the very low-income veteran family's needs and preferences.

5. What is the definition of “permanent housing”?

“Permanent housing” means community-based housing without a designated length of stay. Examples of permanent housing include, but are not limited to, a house or apartment with a month-to-month or annual lease term or home ownership.

6. What is a “NOFA”?

A “NOFA” is a Notice of Fund Availability, which is a document that VA will publish in the Federal Register to announce the availability of grant funds for the SSVF Program. The NOFA will describe the location of the grant applications; the date, time, and place for submitting completed applications; the estimated amount and type of funding available; and other information and requirements for the use of the grant funds.

B. ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS

7. Who can receive supportive services under the SSVF Program?

To receive supportive services under this program, you must be:

A. A member of a Veteran family: A Veteran family is defined as a single person or a family in which the head of household or the spouse of the head of household is a Veteran.

B. Very low-income: Your household income does not exceed 50% of area median income (as adjusted).

C. “Occupying Permanent Housing:” You either (i) are residing in permanent housing; (ii) are homeless and scheduled to become a resident of permanent housing within 90 days pending the location or development of housing suitable for permanent housing; or, (iii) have exited permanent housing within the previous 90 days to seek other housing that is responsive to your needs and preferences.

8. Are Veterans who are single (not part of a family) eligible?

Yes. The definition of “Veteran family” used in the SSVF Program includes Veterans who are single and families in which the head of household, or the spouse of the head of household, is a Veteran.

9. What income limits apply to participants under the SSVF Program?

To receive supportive services, a Veteran family's annual income cannot exceed 50% of the area median income.

10. Can Veterans with/without disabilities be served under an SSVF Program grant? Can Veterans that have/do not have mental health or substance abuse issues be served under an SSVF Program grant?

To receive supportive services, a person must (i) be a Veteran who is a single person, or part of a family in which the head of household or the spouse of the head of household is a Veteran; (ii) have less than 50% area median income; and (iii) fall within one of the three categories of “occupying permanent housing”. Disabilities, mental health or substance abuse issues do not

uniquely qualify or disqualify someone from receiving supportive services under the SSVF Program.

11. Can families who have a head of household serving on active duty military be served by the SSVF Program?

No, to be eligible for supportive services, the recipient must be a Veteran or a member of a family in which the head of household, or the spouse of the head of household, is a Veteran. A Veteran is someone who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.

12. If a Veteran gets divorced while family members are receiving supportive services, must those family members stop receiving supportive services?

No, if a Veteran becomes absent from the household while other members of the family are currently receiving supportive services, the family members can continue to receive supportive services for a grace period. The grace period time will be set by individual grantees and cannot exceed one year.

13. Please explain what category (2) of the “occupying permanent housing” definition means. What does “scheduled” mean?

Category 2 of the “occupying permanent housing” definition is homeless and scheduled to become a resident of permanent housing within 90 days pending the location or development of housing suitable for permanent housing. To be “scheduled,” a plan must be in place for the Veteran family to move into permanent housing within 90 days. The plan does not necessarily mean that a lease must be in place, but the plan must be concrete enough that a grantee could certify that a plan is in place for the Veteran family to move into the permanent housing within 90 days.

14. Where would grantees expect to identify very low-income Veteran families residing in permanent housing who are at-risk of homelessness?

To begin, you may want to look at experiences HUD grantees had implementing the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (“HPRP”). Other resources include housing courts; landlords; rental agencies; PHA waiting lists; churches and other places of worship; domestic violence agencies; boards of education (assistance in identifying children who have been absent from school); legal aid organizations; groups assisting people in foreclosure; energy assistance agencies; and, welfare offices among other places. There are two other areas that may also be important resources to identifying those at risk: (1) VA Medical Centers, and (2) Veterans Benefit Administration offices, which often work with Veterans who identify themselves as in distress and need additional support.

C. ELIGIBLE ENTITIES / APPLICANTS

15. Who is eligible to apply for a supportive services grant under the SSVF Program?

Private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives are the only entities eligible to receive SSVF grants.

A “private non-profit organization” is defined as any of the following:

- (1) An incorporated private institution or foundation that: (i) Has no part of the net earnings that inure to the benefit of any member, founder, contributor, or individual; (ii) Has a governing board that is responsible for the operation of the supportive services provided under this part; and (iii) Is approved by VA as to financial responsibility.
- (2) A for-profit limited partnership, the sole general partner of which is an organization meeting the requirements of paragraphs (1)(i), (ii) and (iii).
- (3) A corporation wholly owned and controlled by an organization meeting the requirements of paragraphs (1)(i),(ii), and (iii).
- (4) A tribally designated housing entity (as defined in section 4 of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (25 U.S.C. 4103)).

A “consumer cooperative” has the meaning given such term in section 202 of the Housing Act of 1969 (12 U.S.C. 1701q).

16. Can a non-profit that does not provide direct services apply?

All grantees are required to provide the following supportive services: outreach; case management; assisting participants to obtain VA benefits; and assisting participants to coordinate and obtain other public benefits in the community. To be awarded a supportive services grant, the applicant would need to demonstrate that these required supportive services will be provided – either directly or through partner organizations.

17. Are local units of government eligible for this program?

Unless a governmental entity is organized as a “private non-profit organization” or “consumer cooperative”, the governmental entity will not be eligible to receive a grant under the SSVF Program. Non-profit entities and consumer cooperatives are encouraged to coordinate with local governments.

D. SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

18. Which supportive services are grantees required to provide?

All grantees are required to provide the following supportive services: outreach; case management; assisting participants to obtain VA benefits; and assisting participants to coordinate and obtain other public benefits in the community.

19. What supportive services are needed by participants?

Grantees will need to evaluate each participant to determine what types of supportive services the participant needs in order to obtain or remain in permanent housing.

20. Can temporary financial assistance be provided to participants?

Yes, grantees may elect to provide temporary financial assistance for rent, penalties, or fees; utility fees; security or utility deposits; moving costs; purchase of emergency supplies; transportation; and child care. Payments are subject to the restrictions in §§ 62.33 and 62.34 of the Final Rule and the Notice of Fund Availability, including time/amount limitations, development of housing stability plan, and the requirement that payments only be made to third parties.

21. Are grantees required to provide referrals to all of the public benefits listed in § 62.33 of the Final Rule?

No, grantees are required to assist participants to obtain and coordinate the nine public benefits listed in § 62.33 of the Final Rule if they are being provided by a Federal, state, local, or tribal agency or an eligible entity in the community served by the grantee. If a public benefit is *not* being provided by another entity in the community, the grantee is not required to help the participant obtain that missing public benefit.

22. Can grantees directly provide any of the public benefits listed in § 62.33 of the Final Rule?

Yes, except for health care services and daily living services, grantees can choose to directly provide the public benefits listed in § 62.33 of the Final Rule. Although grantees could provide these services directly, it may be more cost-efficient in some situations for grantees to provide a referral if the services are already being provided by another entity in the community.

E. APPLICATION PROCESS

23. How many grants does VA expect to award in the first year of the SSVF Program?

It is difficult to foresee right now how many grantees will ultimately be funded. Currently, VA expects to issue a NOFA announcing the availability of approximately \$50 million. The number of grantees will be dependent on the cap set in the NOFA, and the amount requested by each applicant. Applicants may request any amount up to the cap in the NOFA, and such amount must be justified by demonstrating why that amount is sufficient for what the applicant is trying to accomplish and the number of Veteran families the applicant will serve.

24. Can grants be awarded to agencies in the same service area?

Yes. As communities have varying needs, and larger communities may have significantly more needs, there may be several grantees in those communities. However, VA will attempt to equitably distribute grant funds as required by the program statute.

25. What is the maximum grant dollar amount that will be funded?

The NOFA will announce the maximum grant size.

26. Will the application require a budget? If so, in what way does VA expect supportive services to be budgeted (i.e. a per diem, flat rate, or some other manner)?

The application will require applicants to submit a monthly budget and a total budget. It will not be per diem or a flat rate because participants will have different needs depending upon their situation. Applicants can expect to provide information about the types of employees and the costs they will have, the cost of providing supportive services, and how much temporary financial assistance will be provided.

27. When is the application due date?

The NOFA will announce the application due date.

28. Where can we obtain technical assistance with the application?

Information about available technical assistance can be found on VA's SSVF Program website: <http://www1.va.gov/HOMELESS/SSVF.asp>. There will be a second webcast focused on the NOFA and application process that will be posted to this website following release of the NOFA in December 2010. In addition, the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) is VA's grant-writing technical assistance provider. VA and CSH will be hosting regional grant-writing workshops beginning in January 2011. Information about these seminars and other available assistance will also be posted to VA's SSVF Program website. If you have specific questions on the application and would like to contact CSH directly, their contact information is as follows: 1-312-332-6690 ext. 17 (this is not a toll free number) or SSVFinfo@csh.org.

F. GENERAL OPERATIONS

29. Can supportive services grant funds be used to pay for rental applications and background fees?

Yes, in accordance with the Final Rule and the Notice of Fund Availability, supportive services grant funds can be used to pay for reasonable rent, penalties, or fees (including application or background fees) so long as the payment is helping the participant remain in or obtain permanent housing.

30. Is it expected that the service providers who apply will be affiliated with a local VAMC?

There should be coordination between the local VA medical center and anyone applying for these grants. The expectation is that many of the Veterans served through the SSVF grant will get their healthcare services from VA. Furthermore, VA can also identify those at risk who may be served by grant providers through this program, so the expectation is that yes, there would be a relationship between the provider and the local VA.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to participate both in the VA CHALENG process as well as in their local continuum of care. We also strongly recommend that anyone who does apply for these grants shows strong linkage to other community organizations. You can see that the range of services provided through the SSVF Program is quite broad, and it is unlikely that any single organization will provide the whole range of services expected by SSVF. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with non-VA organizations will enhance the quality of applications (VA cannot complete MOUs for the SSVF Program application).

31. Can you explain the differences between the HUD-VASH and the SSVF programs?

The Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Veterans Affairs Supported Housing (HUD-VASH) Program, through a cooperative partnership, provides long-term case management, supportive services and permanent housing support. Through the HUD-VASH program, eligible homeless Veterans receive VA provided case management and supportive services to support stability and recovery from physical and mental health, substance use, and functional concerns contributing to or resulting from homelessness.

Unlike HUD-VASH, the SSVF Program will not directly provide housing. Instead, under the SSVF Program, grantees will provide supportive services aimed at helping Veteran families meeting one of the categories of “occupying permanent housing”, which includes both homeless and at-risk of homeless Veteran families, to achieve housing stability.

32. What type of file management does VA expect grantees to keep (such as case notes, logs, etc)?

Grantees will need to keep records on the supportive services provided to participants. In addition, grantees are required to submit quarterly and annual reports to VA which will contain information relating to operational effectiveness, fiscal responsibility, supportive services grant agreement compliance, and legal and regulatory compliance, including a description of the use of supportive services grant funds, the number of participants assisted, the types of supportive services provided, and any other information that VA may request. Grantees may be required to enter data into a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) web-based software application and should reference the Notice of Fund of Availability for additional information.

33. What are the audit requirements for grantees?

Grantees must use a financial management system that provides adequate fiscal control and accounting records and meetings the requirements set forth in OMB Circular A-110, Subpart C, Section 21 (38 CFR 49.21). Grantees must also comply with applicable requirements of the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 (31 U.S.C. 75018-7507) and revised OMB Circular A-133 (38 CFR Part 41).

34. Who will be responsible for oversight of this program?

Direct oversight for the SSVF Program will be the responsibility of VA. VA will report on the progress to Congress.

35. What are the most important outcomes that VA will be looking for from grantees?

Important outcomes include: participants made progress in achieving housing stability; participants were satisfied with the supportive services provided by the grantee; the grantee implemented the program and delivered supportive services in a timely manner; the grantee prevented homelessness among very low-income veteran families occupying permanent housing that were most at-risk of homelessness

G. MISCELLANEOUS

36. When is the NOFA being released?

VA expects that the NOFA will be available in December 2010. Once published, information will be posted on the SSVF program webpage (www1.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp).